

**ADDRESS: 405 AND 407 S 42<sup>ND</sup> ST**

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Philly Properties GP LLC

Nominator: The Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Megan Cross Schmitt, [megan.schmitt@phila.gov](mailto:megan.schmitt@phila.gov), 215-686-7660

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate a twin house in the Spruce Hill section of West Philadelphia. Under Criteria C and D, the nomination argues the subject twins “showcase the significant aesthetic development in the evolution of residential architecture in Philadelphia during the last third of the nineteenth century.” The nomination also contends that numbers 405 & 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street possess “a distinctive polychromatic façade that sets off the otherwise ubiquitous building type in the Spruce Hill neighborhood of West Philadelphia.” The nomination suggests that the subject property is an exemplary specimen of a twin that is distinguished with a façade of Serpentine stone with marble stone trimmings, comprising a prominent and intact polychromatic design.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the properties at 405 & 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street satisfy Criteria for Designation C and D.



**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street

Postal code: 19104 Councilmanic District: 2

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Unknown

Current/Common Name: Unknown

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building       Structure       Site       Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:     excellent     good       fair       poor       ruins

Occupancy:    occupied    vacant     under construction     unknown

Current use: Apartment House

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1876 to 1878

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1876-78

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Builder: Albert Dremmel

Original owner: Richard Holmes Townsend, M.D.

Other significant persons: Not Applicable

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization The Keeping Society of Philadelphia Date March 26, 2019

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Email Keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 3/26/2019

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 13 March 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 14 March 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Philly Properties GP LLC c/o Austin Siboni

Address: PO Box 696

City: Alpine State: NJ Postal Code: 07620

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

# NOMINATION

FOR THE

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



*Figure 1. Looking south at the primary (west) elevation of the subject buildings at 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Redfin.*

**405 AND 407 S. 42<sup>ND</sup> STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19104  
BUILT 1876-78**



## 7. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. SITUATE on the East side of 42nd Street. at the distance of 160 feet and 7/8 of an inch Southward from the South side of Pine Street, CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said 42nd Street 31 feet 6 inch and extending of that width in length or depth Eastward between parallel lines at right angles to the said 42nd Street 159 feet.

BEING No. 405 South 42nd Street.

OPA No. 881610500, Deed Registry No. 020S18-0034

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. SITUATE on the East side of Forty-second Street at the distance of 191 feet, 6 and 7/8 inches Southward from the South side of Pine Street, CONTAINING in front of breadth on the said Forty-Second Street 31 feet, 6 inches and extending of that width in length or depth Eastwardly between parallel lines at right angles to the said Forty-second Street 159 feet, BOUNDED North and South by ground now or late of Richard H. Townsend, East by ground now or late of George W. Allen and West by Forty-second Street aforesaid.

BEING No. 407 South Forty-second Street.

OPA No. 881610600, Deed Registry No. 020S18-0035



*Figure 2.* The boundaries for the proposed designations are delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia.



*Figure 3. The primary (west) elevation of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.*

## **7. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Set in the architecturally rich, historic built environment of the Spruce Hill neighborhood in West Philadelphia, the twin residence at 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street is a three-story building of load-bearing, masonry construction with a flat roof. The building originally contained two residences, divided vertically by a brick party wall.

**Forty-four** feet in width, the primary (west) elevation is dominated by a polychromatic façade set off by a solid wall of serpentine stone, also known as “Pennsylvania green stone” and/or “Chester County green stone,” laid in a random ashlar. The polychrome motif is created with the introduction of the gray marble trimmings into the otherwise green stone front. The fenestration is a symmetrical arrangement of six apertures per floor, three per residence. Flanking the party wall, the first-floor features two doorways, one per residence, defined by like-gray marble surrounds that each feature Roman arches comprised of voussoirs. Each doorway features original or period appropriate wooden doors with large vertical lights and transoms. Beyond each respective doorway to the north and south are two windows defined by segmental arch window hoods comprised of gray marble voussoirs. Gray marble coursing spans the façade connecting all the window hoods and the door surround. The second and third floors feature three like-size windows per floor, also defined by segmental arch window hoods comprised of gray marble voussoirs. All the window hoods within each residence’s façade are connected by gray marble coursing. The primary (west) elevation terminates with a projecting cornice that features simple, incised details, resembling designs influenced by Charles Eastlake (1836-1906). The cornice features a return at both corners, extending a few feet onto the north and south elevations. The building features a flat roof.

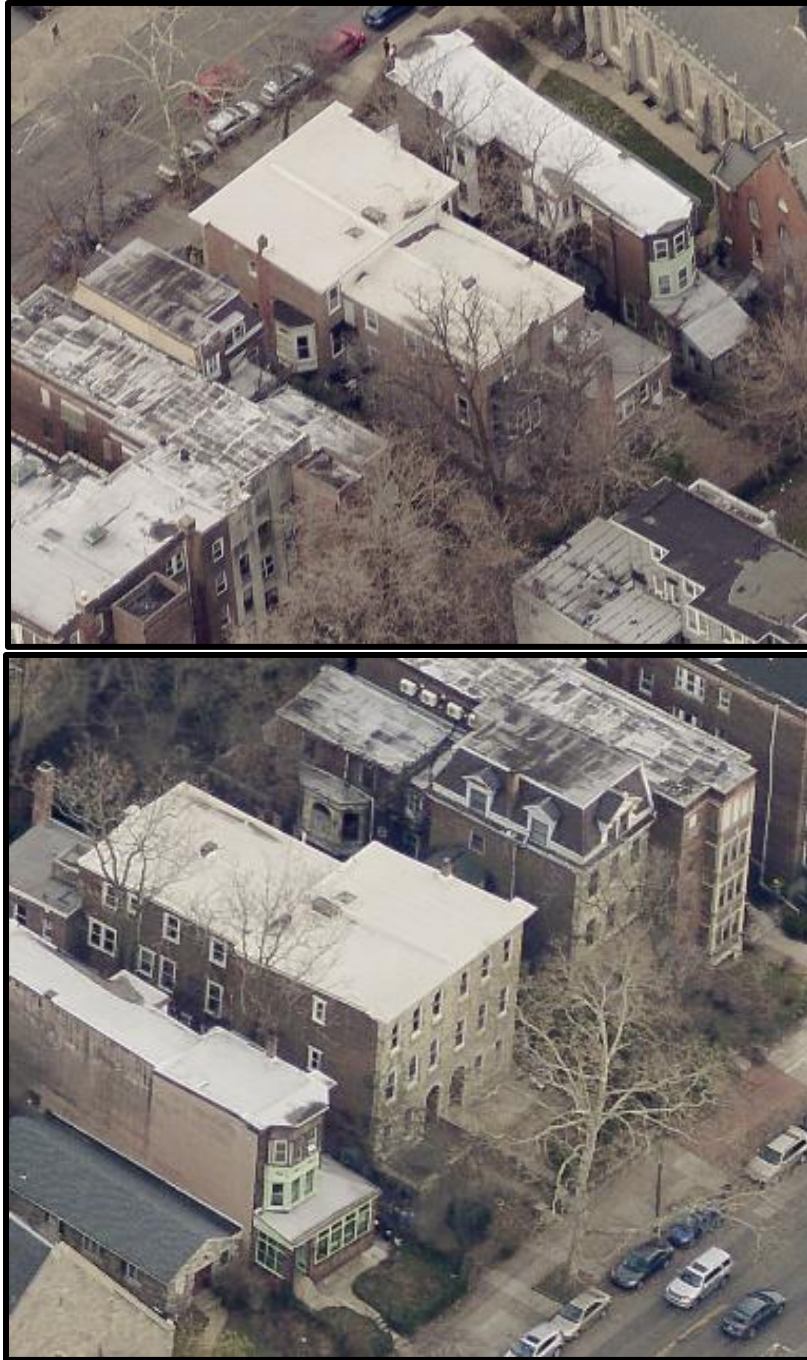
Both roughly thirty-five feet deep, the north and south elevations of the main block feature one small window per floor, except for the south elevation, from which protrudes a three-part bay window at the second story. The piazzas are not visible from a public right-of-way.





*Figure 4. Both photographs show the primary (west) elevation of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.*





*Figure 5. Top: Looking northwest at the south and east elevations of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Figure 6. Bottom: Looking southeast at the primary (west) and north elevations. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.*





*Figure 7. Top: Looking northeast at the primary (west) and south elevations of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Figure 8. Bottom: Looking west at the rear elevations. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.*





*Figure 9. Top: The primary (west) elevation of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Figure 10. Bottom: The primary (west) and north elevations. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2018.*

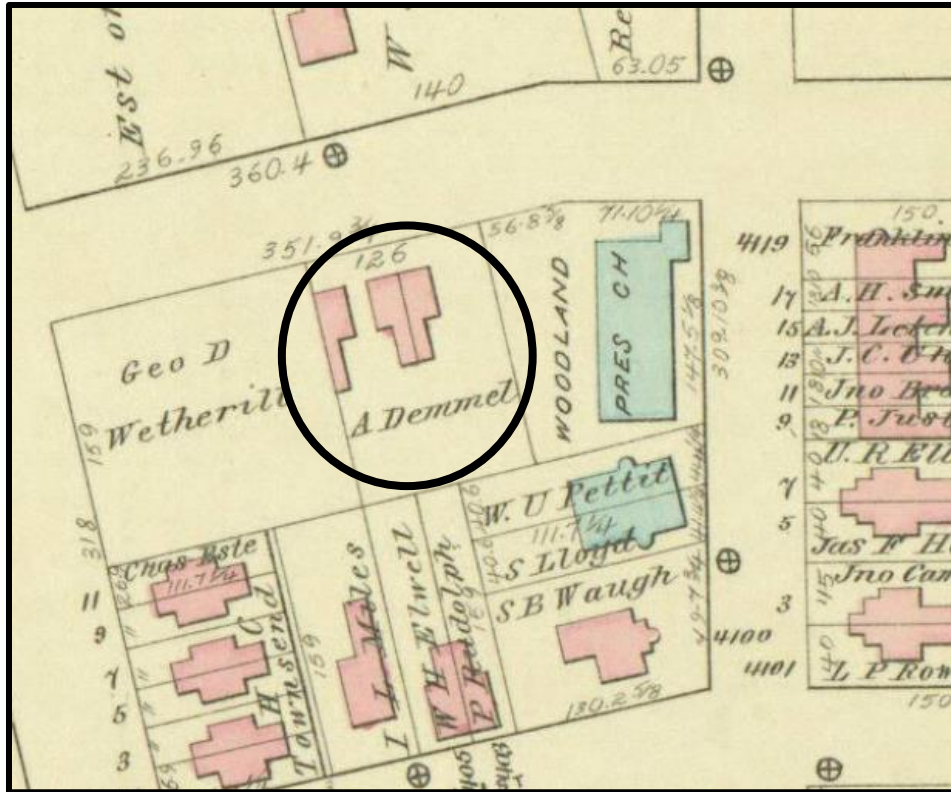


Figure 11. 1878 Atlas, West Philadelphia, J.B. Scott. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A distinctive example of a polychromatic façade of Serpentine stone and gray marble, the twin, comprised by two residences at 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.

Period of significance: 1876-78.



I have Surveyed a Brick Dwlg. with green  
stone front belonging to Walter P. Brown and  
Paul Brown  
Situate on the E. side of S. 42<sup>nd</sup> St. No. 405 S. of Pine  
St. Being 22' front x 35<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>' deep. Back Bldg. 16 x 42<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>'  
both 3 stories. Attached shed back 16' x 10', one story + a  
bay window over it at 2<sup>nd</sup> story 5' x 10'; both of wood. also  
a porch in front 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>' x 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>' of wood + one story - walls 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>' -  
1<sup>st</sup> story - 3 rooms, Vestibule + passage + pantry closet -  
Front + Vest. doors of walnut. 2 lts. in latter 14 x 58, seg-  
ment head transoms to both. W. M. floor + base 39" (in  
Vest.) one other closet. Pantry shelved. Y. p. wainscotg.  
(in Kitchen). double oven Range, 30 gal. boiler + iron sink.  
2 Slate mantels. Front windows 2 lts. 28 x 44; walnut  
sash, inside do. blinds, 4 folds + bows. Back windows 4  
lts. 15 x 33 + one 15 x 42, (cut to the floor) with jib shutters of  
walnut. Stucco cornice - 3 centres. Height 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>' + 9'

*Figure 12.* Insurance Survey S14083 for 405 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Walter P. and Paul Brown, The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire. Source: PhiladelphiaBuildings.org.

### Historic Background

The subject properties were built through the process known as bonus building or advance-money mortgage building that came to replace the ground-rent building process in Philadelphia in the late 1850s. The seed that led to the development of the subject property was planted on April 24, 1875, when Emma Ward, and James C. and Francis J. McCurdy sold a vacant lot with a frontage of 146 feet on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to Richard Holmes Townsend, M.D.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Townsend purchased the property with the intention to participate in the West Philadelphia building boom of the 1870s. On March 24, 1876 he entered into an agreement with Albert Dremmel, “house carpenter,” to build “four substantial dwelling houses with back buildings.”<sup>2</sup> Dr. Townsend loaned Dremmel \$22,050 to purchase the property and an additional \$18,550 to build the houses, all of which were secured by three-year mortgages due to Townsend on terms. The money for construction (\$4,637.50 per house) would be advanced incrementally at predefined stages in the construction of the houses.

Dr. Townsend had a very clear idea of the type of “substantial dwelling houses” he wanted. The agreement is very detailed about the design and finishes of both the exterior and interior of the houses which suggests that perhaps an architect may have been involved with the design. For the exterior of the houses it states:

<sup>1</sup> Deed: Emma M. Ward, of the city, single woman, James C. McCurdy, of the city, publisher, and Fanny J., his wife, to Richard H. Townsend, of the city, doctor of medicine, for \$18,375, 24 April 1875, Philadelphia Deed Book F.T.W., No. 204, p. 146, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter CAP).

<sup>2</sup> Articles of Agreement between Richard H. Townsend and Albert Demmel, carpenter, 24 March 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 16, p. 262, CAP.

The main building to be thirty six feet in depth. The front or main building to be of Chester County Green Stone with gray marble trimmings, with back stretcher bricks on gable end. The back building to be of best back stretcher bricks laid in white mortar.<sup>3</sup>

The houses were to be set back 20 feet from the street. Each house was to have “all the modern conveniences,” such as two bathrooms with “water closets with walnut finish and stationary wash stands” in the front rooms on the second and third floors. The interiors were all to be finished “in a first class manner” with walnut woodwork and stairs and 13 feet, 4 inch and 12 foot ceilings on the first and second floors respectively.

On March 25, 1876, Townsend and his wife Mary S. conveyed title to the property to Albert Dremmel and on the same day Dremmel entered into mortgages with Townsend for four subdivisions of original lot.<sup>4</sup> Dremmel decided to start out building three of the four houses. At the end of June, Dremmel was issued a building permit for three three-story dwelling houses, 22 by 75 feet.<sup>5</sup>

While the house carpenter would go on to build the twins that occupy the subject properties, as well as a detached dwelling to the south, Dremmel would ultimately lose the property, likely unable to fulfill the financial obligations of the development agreement. The property was sold at sheriff’s sale on January 26, 1878, at which time Sheriff William H. Wright deeded and conveyed the property back to Townsend, no doubt to recoup his investment in the development. On July 31, 1880 Dr. Townsend sold 405 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to Diantha I. Pulsifer and on June 29, 1882, 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to Mary E. Wetherill.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Articles of Agreement between Richard H. Townsend and Albert Demmel, carpenter, 24 March 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 16, p. 262, CAP.

<sup>4</sup> Deed: Richard H. Townsend, of the city, medical doctor, and Mary S., his wife, to Albert Demmel, of the city, carpenter, for \$22,050, 24 March 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 16, p. 276, CAP

<sup>5</sup> *The Record*, 1 July 1876.

<sup>6</sup> Plan 20 S 18, Plots 34 and 35, Philadelphia Deed Registry Ledger, CAP.



*Figure 13. The first floor of the primary (west) elevation of 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Redfin.*

- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.**
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.**

With its captivating façade of Serpentine stone and gray marble trimmings presented in a distinguished modern format of the 1870s, the twins at 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, built between 1876 and 1878, showcase the significant aesthetic development in the evolution of residential architecture in Philadelphia during the last third of the nineteenth century. The building possesses a distinctive polychromatic façade that sets off the otherwise ubiquitous building type in the Spruce Hill neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The building embodies the following three distinguishing characteristics and themes:

1. The building features a polychromatic façade at its primary (west) elevation.
2. The polychromatic façade is achieved with Serpentine stone and gray marble trim, the former of which represents a local, niche building material from Chester County, Pennsylvania.
3. The presentation of the façade is in a modern format and application of the said materials that relates to other fashionable architectural styles of the period.

As previously stated, the handsome twin at 405 and 407 South 42<sup>nd</sup> Street was commissioned as two of three single family dwellings by Richard H. Townsend, M.D., a local real estate investor, and erected by Albert Demmel, a “house carpenter.” The Articles of Agreement between Dr. Townsend and Demmel were quite specific, calling for the use of “Chester County Green Stone” and gray marble trimmings. Why exactly Dr. Townsend insisted on Serpentine stone is unknown, but it is clear that a design had been settled upon at the time the contract was executed on March



24, 1876. Dr. Townsend (and, likely, his architect) and Demmel knew about the recently completed and nearby buildings of University of Pennsylvania, along with the increased employment of Serpentine as the primary façade material of attached, semi-detached, and detached residences in Philadelphia and the larger region and the subject twin is representative of this period of residential architecture.

decorate. In practice, the term "polychromy" is applied to architectural palettes if the intend of the palette is to contrast color values. For example, a Victorian house painted in two contrasting shades of green with a red accent is considered polychromatic. But, a Neo-Classical building built of white and whitish-gray limestone whose window trim is painted very light gray is considered monochromatic because the colors were not intended to contrast with each other. Also, not all polychromatic palettes were wildly elaborate or ostentatiously colored. There was a taste, especially in the United States, for subdued, if not downright subtle, polychromatic palettes.

*Figure 14. Excerpt: Jane Elizabeth Dorchester, "The Evolution of Serpentine Stone as a Building Material in Southeastern Pennsylvania: 1727-1931" (master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 59.*

### **1. The building features a polychromatic façade at its primary (west) elevation.**

In the last third of the nineteenth century architectural trends and fashionable designs evolved, resulting in more vibrant polychromatic facades. While the employment of polychrome was certainly a trend in romantic architectural styles of the mid-nineteenth century like the Greek and Gothic Revivals and even Italianate, the color schemes were far more modest and muted combinations and tones. In addition, this form of the polychromatic treatment was largely limited to more temporary schemes defined by being "painted or applied," which differs greatly from more permanent forms of the later nineteenth century. Later buildings featured "structural or permanent" designs.<sup>7</sup> While the taste for polychromatic facades would never be as popular on this side of the Atlantic as it was in England and Europe, American architects adopted evolved Gothic and Greek Revival stylistic treatments known as the English Neo-Gothic and the French Neo-Grec, among other eclectic forms and styles. The origins of these architectural trends were discussed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination for 4100 Haverford Avenue: West Philadelphia Passenger Railway Co. (1876):

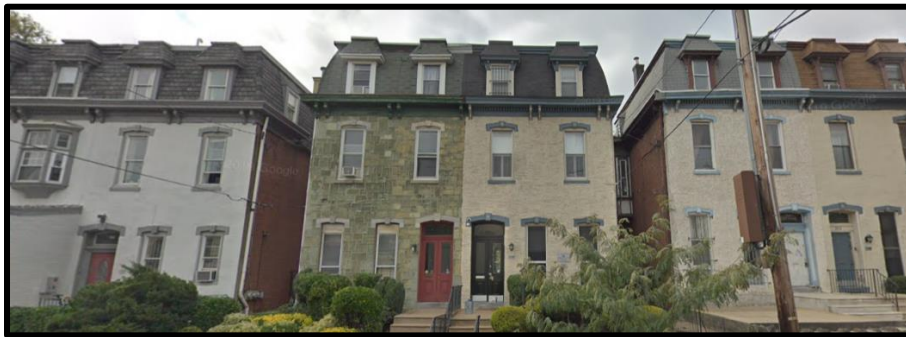
The decades after the Civil War were a time of "boisterous growth and eclectic stylistic experimentation characterized by a profusion of ornament, contrasting materials, polychromy, and picturesque rooflines... [l]oosely defined today as the 'High Victorian' period in American design..." and influenced by two major architectural movements in Europe: the English Gothic Revival, inspired by the writing A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin, and the French Neo-Grec movement that

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<sup>7</sup> Jane Elizabeth Dorchester, "The Evolution of Serpentine Stone as a Building Material in Southeastern Pennsylvania: 1727-1931" (master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 60.

“reinterpreted classical architectural forms and theories for the industrial age.”<sup>8</sup> These movements were “synthesized and integrated into new design approaches by a generation of American architects acutely conscious of their power to shape a new industrial society.” In Philadelphia, the most accomplished, innovative, and well-known practitioner of this type of High Victorian synthesis was Frank Furness, whose magnificent work for the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was completed the same year as the construction of 4100 Haverford Avenue. In the 1850s and ‘60s, Furness had studied at the small atelier of his mentor, Richard Morris Hunt, whose Tenth Street Studio Building in New York is credited as being one of the earliest American expressions of Neo-Grec rationalism. “The early Néogrec works of Hunt and his American followers eschewed overt historicist references in favor of more legible structural expression in which, to paraphrase Neil Levine, emphasized the ‘decoration of construction’ over the ‘construction of decoration.’”<sup>9</sup>

Like the West Philadelphia Passenger Railway Co. Depot, the façade of the twins at 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street fits into its own niche sector of polychromatic design, though the two buildings share some of the modern decorative elements and forms—primarily the use of coursing stemming from beneath the window hood moldings. Ultimately, the Depot fits into a wider, more commonly known category with red brick as its primary façade material. Unlike the Depot, the subject building features green stone as a vivid backdrop for its smooth gray marble details. Though red brick is certainly used in the side and rear elevations, it is secondary to the stone front. With numerous examples known across the city, this combination of Serpentine and other trim stones constitutes a subtype of Polychromatic facades that characterized the built environment of Philadelphia during the 1870s and 1800s.



*Figure 15. A row of twin dwellings on S. 41<sup>st</sup> Street near Walnut Street in West Philadelphia. Built in the 1870s in the Second Empire style, these houses all featured distinctive serpentine fronts with gray marble trimmings, only of which survives with its original stone front exposed. Source: Google.*

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<sup>8</sup> H.R. Haas, “1026 Arch Street: Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2017, 25.

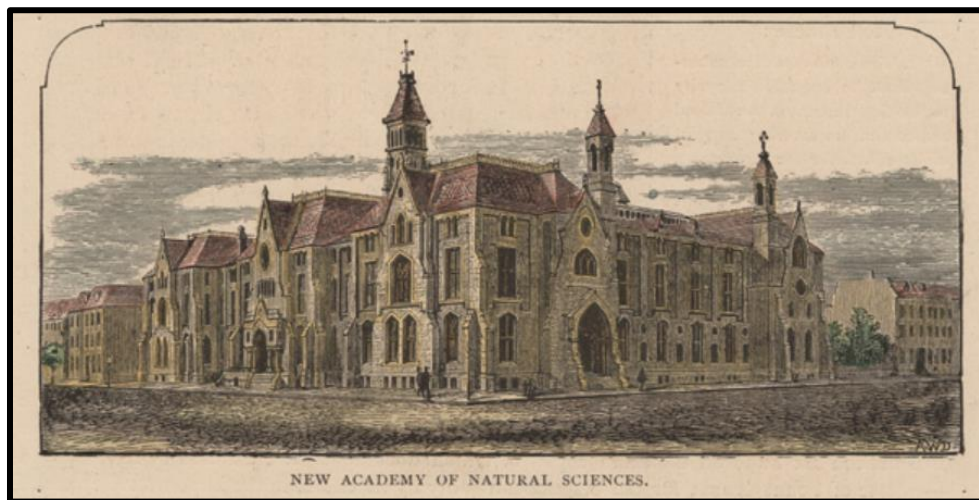
<sup>9</sup> Oscar Beisert, “4100 Haverford Avenue: West Philadelphia Passenger Railway Co. Depot,” Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2018, 19-20. This specific section was drafted by Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner with the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

2. The polychromatic façade is achieved with Serpentine stone, which not only represents this evolved polychromy, but also a local, niche building material from Chester County, Pennsylvania.
3. The presentation of the façade is in a modern format and application of the said materials that relates to other fashionable architectural styles.

By 1878 the following was published in the *Scranton Weekly Republican* about the common use of marble and serpentine in Philadelphia’s built environment:

Philadelphia is losing its character for brick houses and white shutters. Brown stone, green serpentine, and marble front have increased to such an extent as to change the aspect of many sections of the city. Mansard roofs and bay windows have become very numerous, and front shutters in the new style of houses are generally dispensed with. Inside shutters are considered sufficient.<sup>10</sup>

While the use of Serpentine stone in Pennsylvania began as early as the 1720s, the period of its greatest application spans from 1868 to 1895 with the 1870s and 1880s as the most prolific years. Philadelphia saw the construction of several “monumental buildings” in evolved, modern architectural styles such as the Neo-Gothic and the Neo-Grec, both of which often used vibrant polychromatic palettes as a departure from Romanticism and its muted application of polychromy.<sup>11</sup> Philadelphia’s Academy of Natural Sciences (1868) was designed by James Hamilton Windrim (1840-1919).<sup>12</sup> Shown below in Figure 16, the building was an early example of a polychromy in monumental building.



*Figure 16.* The “New Academy of Natural Sciences,” c. 1875, featured a façade of Serpentine stone. Source: <https://www.anspblog.org/catching-up-on-the-academys-history-on-the-parkway/>

<sup>10</sup> *Scranton Weekly Republican*, 20 March 1878, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Elizabeth Dorchester, “The Evolution of Serpentine Stone as a Building Material in Southeastern Pennsylvania: 1727-1931” (master’s thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 60.

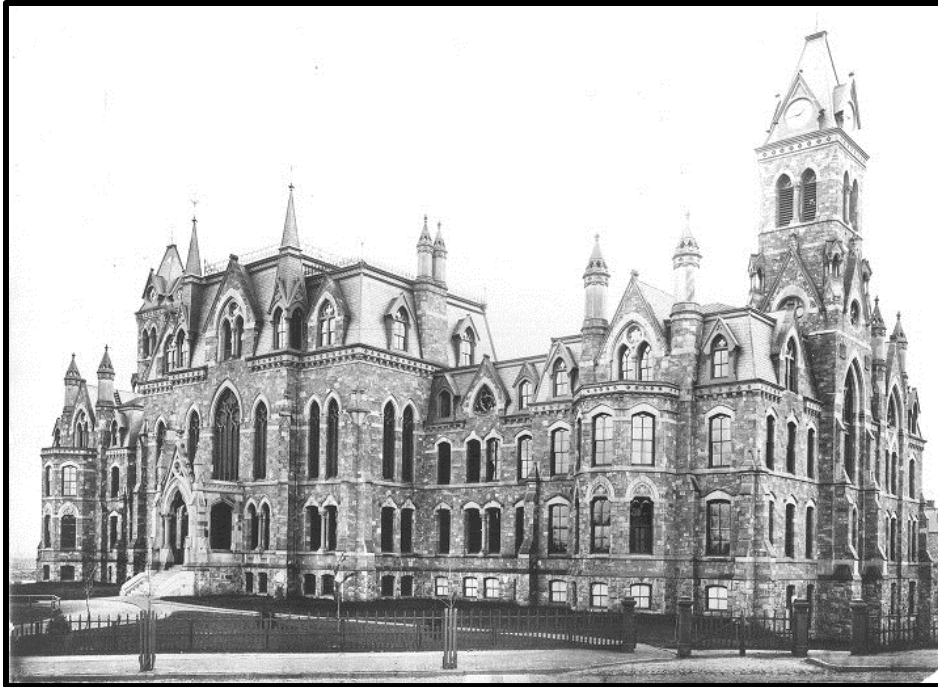
<sup>12</sup> Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1985), s.v. “Windrim, James Hamilton.”



Among the earliest of the city's monumental buildings, the University of Pennsylvania commissioned architect T.W. Richards to design several buildings in the 1870s, employing Serpentine stone as the primary façade material—College Hall (1871-72)—shown in Figures 17 and 18; Logan Hall (1873-74), the University Hospital (1873-74), and the Hare Medical Laboratory (1878). These early specimens were designed in the Collegiate- or Neo-Gothic style with an emphasis on a comprehensive Polychromatic design manifested in vivid color palette with the green stone in contrast to the more commonly engaged masonry materials.



*Figure 17. College Hall, University of Pennsylvania. Source: The Valley Village View.*

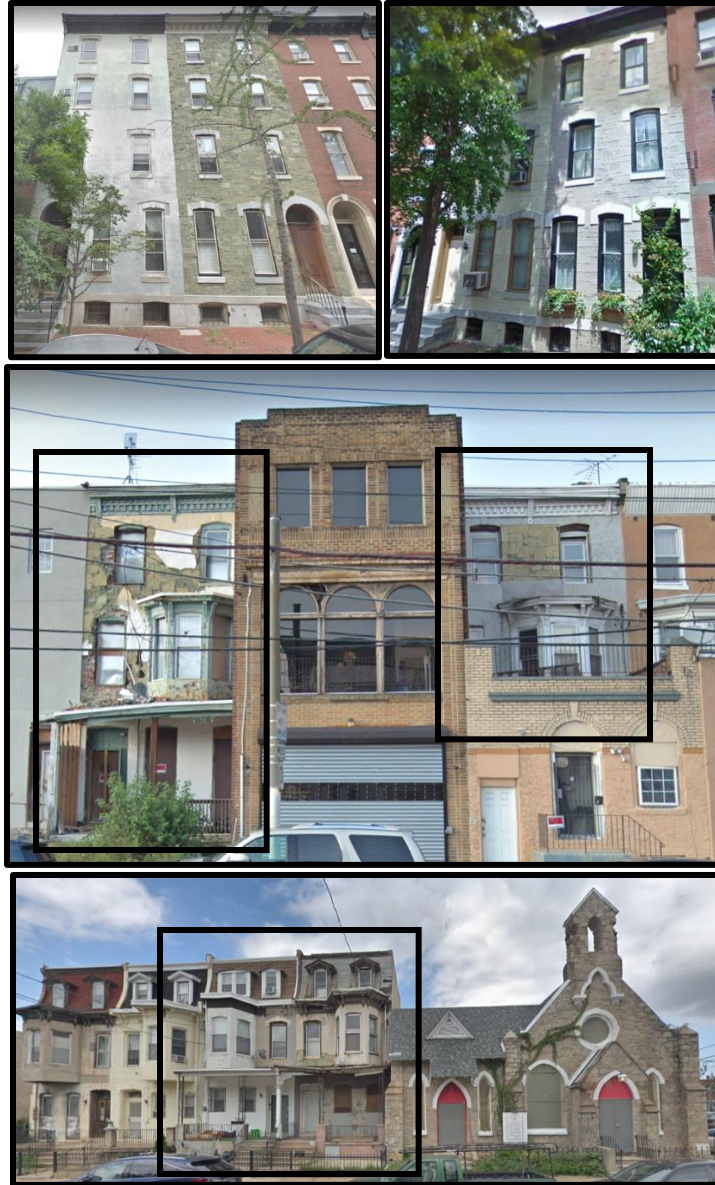


*Figure 18.* College Hall, University of Pennsylvania, ca. 1880. Shows effects of the Polychromatic design with the green stone. Source: University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

Like the subject building, College Hall, shown above and in Figure 17, employs window hood moldings comprised of gray stone voussoirs, from which extend stone banding that divides the façade into sections. While the subject building is far more muted, common features are discernable in the bands and the voussoirs.



*Figure 19.* Top left: Advertisement: “J.H. Brinton’s Serpentine Green,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 October 1875, 7. *Figure 20.* Top right: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 October 1874, 8. *Figure 21.* Bottom: Advertisement: “For Sale,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 4 May 1874), 8. Source: *Newspapers.com*.



*Figure 22. Top left: 2327 Spruce Street, c. 1875.<sup>13</sup> Figure 23. Top right: 2413 Spruce Street, c1870s. Figure 24. Center: Girard Avenue east of 41<sup>st</sup> Street. Figure 25. Bottom: 3900 Block of Powelton Avenue. Source: Google.*

During the 1870s and 1880s, Serpentine stone was used with other trim stones to create polychromatic façades, which was perhaps most popular in modest to high style formats used in residential design. Naturally, Philadelphia had numerous examples, most of which have been demolished or rendered unrecognizable through deterioration of the stone, lack of maintenance and “improvements.” Figure 15 shows a row of Second Empire style twins, only one dwelling of which has retained the original green stone façade. The use polychromatic facades in Philadelphia includes the following house types: detached—Figure 26, semi-detached (i.e. twin)—Figure 15, and attached (i.e. rowhouse) Figures 22, 23, 24, and 25. The examples provided are extant specimen of this architectural trend, representing a subtype of polychromy that characterized aspects of Philadelphia’s built environment. The subject property is an exemplary specimen of a

<sup>13</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 October 1875, 7.



twin that is distinguished with a façade of Serpentine stone with marble stone trimmings, comprising a prominent and intact polychromatic design.



*Figure 26. Top: Biddle Mansion, featuring serpentine stone. Source: Victoria Elizabeth Barnes.  
Figure 27. Bottom: The primary (west) elevation of 405 and 407 S. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Source: Redfin.*

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This nomination was sponsored by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia, and authored by Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, and J. M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian. The nomination was made possible through the generous support of Mary McGettigan of the RCO, West Philadelphians for Progressive Planning and Preservation, and other friends in West Philadelphia.

### Major Bibliographic References

- Articles of Agreement between Richard H. Townsend and Albert Demmel, carpenter, 24 March 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 16, p. 262, CAP.
- Beisert, Oscar. "4100 Haverford Avenue: West Philadelphia Passenger Railway Co. Depot." Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, 2018.
- Deed: Emma M. Ward, of the city, single woman, James C. McCurdy, of the city, publisher, and Fanny J., his wife, to Richard H. Townsend, of the city, doctor of medicine, for \$18,375, 24 April 1875, Philadelphia Deed Book F.T.W., No. 204, p. 146, City Archives of Philadelphia (hereafter CAP).
- Deed: Richard H. Townsend, of the city, medical doctor, and Mary S., his wife, to Albert Demmel, of the city, carpenter, for \$22,050, 24 March 1876, Philadelphia Deed Book D.H.L., No. 16, p. 276, CAP
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